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American Art Journal.

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THE HERALD'S OPERATIC ENTER-PRIZE.

Next to managing the *New York Herald*, the great ambition of Mr. James Gordon Bennett has always been to manage the Italian Opera. He was shrewd enough, however, not to take upon himself any of the responsibilities attached to the managerial position, being content to manage the Manager, thus generously playing the monkey and leaving the Impresario to handle the piping hot chestnuts. So long as the manager submitted to the Bennettorial dictation, the Italian Opera was a lovely institution, and viewed from the best private box, the gift of the grateful manager, the house was a blaze of beauty and fashion, and the stage teemed with the greatest singers in the world, while the greatest star of the whole was the "indomitable," the "indefatigable," the "inscrutable," the "invincible Max," the "Prince of Strategists" and the beau-ideal of an Impresario. Everything was preternaturally serene; it seemed as though the millenium had come and the lion and the lamb were playing leap-frog together.

There was a considerable change, however, when Max assumed the soubriquet of "independent Max," a prefix never uttered or dreamed of by the *Herald*. The pastoral beauty and holy quiet of the scene disappeared; the roseate hue changed to flaring yellow; the happy family dissolved partnership, and the Lion forthwith proceeded to devour the Lamb. But the King of Beasts was aged and purblind, and his failing teeth got entangled in his straggling mane; his claws had lost their point, but his roar was horrible as the frisky lamb, taking advantage of his general decrepitude, planted his heels, now on the ribs, now on the snout, and again in close proximity to the lashing tail of the indignant but impotent monarch.

Vanquished and mortified, the Monarch of the Forest, unable to bite, roared daily in large type, in barely allowable "billings-gate," its sorrows to the world. But alas! the tale of its grievances fell upon unsympathizing ears, and in its old age, saddened by defeat and mourning after its vanished privileges, it stood alone friendless and unpitied. Its rage was vented not only on the "indomitable Max," but upon the audiences, and as for the artists, their shapely figures assumed distorted proportions, their grace was changed to vulgar awkwardness, their passionate declamation to boisterous ranting, their position as first class, sank to fifth rate, and a universal catarrh seized hold of their physical natures and

destroyed every vestige of voice. Such human wrecks as they became in an inconceivably short space of time, the world never saw before, and the audience went prepared with bandages, crutches, splints, cordials, and ambalances, to administer to the expected corps of incapables and incurables. But, strange to say, they found the artists as good, bodily and vocally, as before, and the many wondered at the extraordinary development of the organ of imagination, exhibited by the head of the *Herald*, and all decided that this development had taken the form of disease, and that imagination had degenerated into lying.

Not being able by frightening or by bullying, to recover its lost control of the affairs of the Opera, the *Herald* has taken under its special patronage, every one-horse operatic bubble that has floated to the surface. It has endeavored to elevate the baldest mediocrity into first-class talent, but its mendacious puffing, instead of sustaining the enterprises, rendered certain and has hastened their dissolution.

The last one-horse opera that Mr. Bennett took under his special and dreadfully fatal patronage, if he did not originate and sustain it financially, is the enterprise of Signor Antonio Mora, who from a somewhat obscure teacher, suddenly became a "celebrated and accomplished musician" and a "new Impresario." Flaunting and flimsy editorials, conceived in the Bombastes-Furioso style, announced that the great operatic epoch had arrived; that New York was now to take its stand as one of the great musical centres of the world; that the artists were all nightingales with the unusual appendages of golden-plumaged heads, and bright many-colored tails, and that the new director and impresario had the abilities of Gye and Mapleson combined, and his baton had the concentrated power and magnetism of Jullien, Costa and Mellon.

In addition to this, the editorials proclaimed in a swaggering tone, that the world of Fashion was at fever heat in expectation of this epoch, and that the world had never seen and never would see again, such dazzlingly brilliant assemblages of combined beauty and wealth, as would grace the French Theatre at each representation given by the "new Impresario." Alas! for the *Herald's* peculiar influence! If the fashionable world had a fever of excitement, it had it so severely that it was obliged to stay at home. The house was well filled the first night, by what means we can well understand, but the second night the general public and even the free-ticket-men, seemed to have caught the fever, for the house was scarcely one-third full, and the small portion of humanity present, was frigidly, hopelessly cold.

The fair artist so fatally puffed in the *Herald*, has advantages which, under other circum-

stances, would have secured her success. She is personally charming both in face and figure and her demeanor is eminently graceful and ladylike. Her voice is of good quality but unequal in power. The upper tones are pure and capable of enforcement, but the lower tones, though also pure, are weak and cannot be used with much effect. She is well educated and sings with feeling, but the timbre of her voice precludes the expression of grand sentiment. As an actress she is natural and graceful. On the whole she is an attractive artist, and we are sorry that she was offered as a sacrifice at the shrine of the *Herald's* vengeance. The other artists were good, but the orchestra and chorus, and the whole surroundings wore that air of itinerancy, which always accompanies fugitive and ill-digested musical enterprises.

In the meantime we are waiting for that epoch! We are also anxious about that "musical centre," which is now about as invisible as the great "Fenian centre," and we want to know if the *Herald* has definitely fixed its locality. It once, with a monstrous flourish of brazen instruments, located it in Chicago, but unluckily it did not stay fixed. We are also curious to know what Mr. Bennett is going to do with Signor Mora? He has been hoisted up into sight, he has been made a new Impresario, he has been created an "accomplished musician," and now what is Mr. Bennett going to do with him? He ought not to let him down suddenly. He ought at least to place him on his editorial staff. The appointment would create a sensation, for an accomplished musician on the repertorial staff of the *Herald*, has never been since the first penny issue of that paper.

All the bright anticipations raised by the *Herald's* editorials having failed, as usual, we shall have to content ourselves with the facts of Max Maretzek's management, well assured that his promises will be fulfilled, and that his established reign will put an end to the little peddling schemes, which are at once an injury and a disgrace to Musical Art.

MUSIC OF THE WEEK.

The present week has been signalized by a futile attempt to establish an Italian Opera by an irresponsible party, unknown to fame. It was intended as a flank movement against Maretzek and the Academy of Music, and was concocted at Washington Heights. The failure was magnificent, and nothing more need be said.

We have also had a dash of German Opera at one of the Broadway Theatres, which we understand did not amount to much in performance, and still less in profit. Opera enterprises seem to spring up like toad-stools, and are about as valuable, and as much respected. Whether this affair is to be continued or not, we do not know.

Messrs. Pease and Severini have recommenced their very pleasant Morning Concerts, and appearances seem to promise a good success. Their first, on Monday last, was fashionably attended, and the performance gave unqualified satisfaction. Their second concert takes place next Monday, at Steinway Rooms, commencing at three o'clock. Miss Nettie Sterling will assist on this occasion.

To-morrow evening, Sunday, the 25th Sunday Evening Concert will be given at Steinway Hall. The programme will be, as usual, varied and attractive. Miss Kate Macdonald will be the vocal attraction, while the instrumental soloists will be Mr. S. B. Mills and Mr. Heindl. Mr. Thomas's orchestra will render a brilliant selection of instrumental works. We may expect another crowded audience on this occasion.

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY CONCERT.

The accustomed throng at these popular entertainments suffered but slight diminution from inclement weather, and judging from very liberal encores that large public were exceedingly pleased with the programme offered for their acceptance.

Mme. Parepa gave "On Mighty Pens," Bach's "Sacred Song," and Gounod's "Ave Maria," with nice vocalization, the last named exciting more sympathy than its predecessors because displaying her best voice and expression.

Messrs. Rosa and Mills were quite fortunate on that occasion, both in performance and public estimation of their skill, while the orchestra contributed several pleasing features to a very agreeable concert.

MATTERS THEATRIC.

Sweet, courteous, fair, delightful, and in every way remarkable reader! If you want to enjoy a good hearty laugh, go to the Broadway Theatre and witness the performance of Byron's inimitable burlesque of "Aladdin." From beginning to end it is one great pun, and this pun is delightfully interpreted by the piquant Worrell Sisters, Mrs. G. H. Gilbert (whose Widow Swankey is something immense), Mr. T. L. Donnelly, and the entire company.

This is the first opportunity I have had of according to the Worrell Sisters unlimited praise, but in "Aladdin" they are so *naïve*, piquant and jolly that I cannot refrain from speaking of them in these panegyrical terms.

Barring "Aladdin," there is little in the way of novelty at the theatres. "The Merchant of Venice" is in the high tide of success at the Winter Garden, and the performance, I am told, has greatly improved since its first representation. Master Henri Morisson still plays his "Dangerous Game" with infinite *finesse* at Wallack's. The German Opera Troupe still warbles at the Olympic, and at the New York Theatre the "Ticket of Leave Man" has been revived and has drawn fair

houses throughout the week. Mr. G. H. Clarke is a very acceptable Bob Brierly, Mrs. Gomersal is a charming May Edwards, while Messrs. Smith, Baker and Gomersal are each excellent in their respective parts. It would be well, however, for Mrs. Wilkins to remember that vulgarity is not humor, as the lady indulges in some few vagaries during the performance which verge considerably on the indecent, and which, I am happy to state, meet with a few decided hisses from some of the more independent of the audience.

Next week we are to have Lady Don at this establishment, the lady making her first appearance as the Earl of Leicester, in what is rumored to be a very amusing burlesque of "Kenilworth."

Hartz has produced a new mystery which he calls "Proteus," a most astounding affair, and one which quite electrifies the audiences in his pleasant little "Temple." Men, lamps, skeletons and numerous other articles, animate and inanimate, appear and disappear in a most marvellous manner. How Mr. Hartz accomplishes this truly diabolical feat is beyond comprehension, but accomplish it he does, to the great edification and delight of numerous spectators.

"Matters Theatric" are uncommonly short this week, but as the woman in the burlesque says, "If we've no ribbons, how can we make bows?" So in the same tone I say: "If we've nothing to criticise, how can we criticise?" However, "there's a bright little cherub that sits up aloft," and perhaps he may, in course of time drop us a play or two from his elevated position.

SHUGGE.

ART MATTERS.

PRIVATE GALLERY OF W. H. ASPINWALL, ESQ.

Mr. Aspinwall's collection contains among its number many real gems. Modern art is not so fully represented as are the works of the old masters, which give to the gallery a somewhat sombre effect, toned and darkened as they are by age. The gallery is divided into three compartments, a corridor, large, and small gallery. In the first are pictures of a miscellaneous character, the second is devoted to religious and historical subjects, while in the third are to be found almost all the modern pictures contained in the collection. Placed in convenient positions are chairs and ottomans. The unpleasant glare of the sun is kept out by means of large screens suspended from the ceiling, causing a mellow light to fall upon the pictures, which is pleasing to the eye, and does away with the disagreeable dazzle which is to be found in most galleries. Around the room is a wainscoting of black walnut, corresponding well with the dark drapery with which many of the pictures are surrounded, while on the floor is a warm-toned carpet—in short, everything is here which one expects to find in a well regulated picture gallery. With no attempt at trumpery show there is still such an effect of richness and good taste displayed at every point that the visitor cannot refrain from complimenting Mr. Aspinwall on the discrimination and judgment which is everywhere exhibited. There is but a single feeling of regret which one has on visiting this gallery; and that is that its doors

are not thrown open to a greater extent to the general public—such a collection of pictures is a lasting monument to American good taste, and, as such, the people should have an opportunity to see and admire it. In the private galleries abroad this is constantly done, and the masses thus allowed to behold great pictures which otherwise would be entirely beyond their reach. "Ars longa," art is for all time and all people, and let him who has it within his power to purchase noble works of art keep them not to himself alone but rather let him allow his humble brethren to worship and admire with him at the same great shrine.

The first picture that strikes the visitor's eye on entering the Aspinwall Gallery is the "Morning Star" by Riedell, in which there is an excellent effect of light and shade and a beautifully drawn sylph-like female figure, strong in color and remarkably fine in action and expression, full of light, and happily relieved by a dark, sombre sky. The whole picture being characterized by a most delicious feeling of poetic sentiment.

Hanging next to this is the "Puritan Captain" by our own Woodville, an artist who has left behind him a lasting reputation, his pictures being for the most part noted for an almost Meissonier-like finish and delicacy. In the "Puritan Captain" are both these qualities, added to breadth and vigor of handling, making a head which is really superb in its grandeur of expression and power. The stern old Captain lives and breathes once more upon the canvas and in his eye we see the indomitable will and unflinching perseverance which characterized the soldiers of the Reformation.

Entering the Large Gallery the first picture which attracts the attention is an exquisite "Head of the Saviour" by Carlo Dolce, sweet in color and ineffably tender in expression. Combining all those gentle qualities with which we are so fond of investing the great Saviour of mankind, Dolce has here painted a surpassingly beautiful and loveable head. Not only is the expression exquisite but the execution calls equally for praise and admiration; the flesh, drapery, all are excellent and marked by great delicacy and elaboration of detail and finish. I would fain linger over this masterpiece, but time presses and we must on.

"Portrait of a Knight of Malta" by Velasquez. A picture somewhat faulty in drawing and very stiff in its outlines, but marked by great richness of color. This is particularly noticeable in the face and portions of the drapery in which there is great depth of tone and strength of effect.

In Tittian's "Herodias with the Head of John the Baptist," there is that curious anachronism of costume which the old masters were constantly guilty; here we have a picture strong in its individualization of character, fine in color but its entire effect marred by the introduction of costumes such as worn cotemporary with the painter. It has often been to me a source of considerable wonder how men possessed of such large ideas as were many of the old masters should so wilfully have overlooked the necessary adjunct of correct costume in their religious and historical pictures; it is an undeniable fact that we find this same error in nearly all their works,